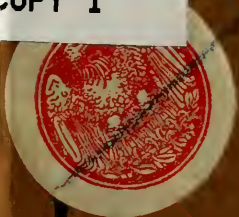


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BLACK INK

by

Henri Cheriot



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BY THE

AUTHOR OF

VARIANT VERSE

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OCT 27 1917



AUTHOR
OF
The following Poems:
Violet Pal
Post-mortem
Tale of a Rose
The Seventh Man
A Smack at School
A Real Santa Claus
Just to Belly-whop Again
Tale of a New-born Brook
Gee! How I wish it was Spring
Days a Fellow never quits Lovin'
Me an' Poll Don't Cuss any More
Toast of the Waste-basket
Rubbish — from Heap
A Back-woods Spit'n
Woodland Mutation
Bride of the Brook
The Little Spitball
The Last Prayer
Knotty Blue
Redeemed
etc.



Think two times
Befo' yo' talk
Den what yo' squeak
Sho' hab de squak

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DIS LITTL' STICK,
AH CALL'D IT, "HOME"--
DIS CABIN;
AN' NOW, IN DREAMS:
AH KNO'S 'T WUZ WUFF
DE HABIN'.

MEMOIRS

AH USED TO BE a' littl' Nig,—
Ain't so awfully-much bigger now;
S'pose b'cause ah smok'd t'bac
An wuz ebber in troubl' an' row.

Ah nebber fo'gets de ol' sow, an' her pigs,
An' our sas'y good-fo'-nuffin' skinny mule,
An' w'at ah learn'd, w'en it come to de tricks;
Dat wuz 'bout de bes' thing in de school.

Ah mem'ers do'se patches ob big melons,
An' de fish's dat ah hauls from de water,
An' de ol' Squire, dat lib'd up de hill -
Who lab no use foh his runaway daughter.

Wish's do'se days wuz back again, -
Doan see w'at 'tis dat meks us get old;
Spec', b'cause w'en de fool-kid am young,
He doan kno' 'nough t'quit messin' wid de cold.

Does ah ebber thinks ob de good groun-peas?
Guess ah do, foh dey wuz big an' fat!
An' de darn bugs, an' skeeters, an' flies;
Always comin' roun' wah ebber ah wuz at.

An' Mammy, an' Pappy, who died ob ol' age,
An' Brothers an' Sisters wid same black face,
An' a'hole lot moah, ah could tell
Ef de Town hadn't come an' spoil de place.

Dey is some things ah would lak to fo'get,
An' dey doan keer to be wantin' to go;
But ah does wish ah could list'n again
To de music ob mah Pap's fiddlin'-bow.

De tunes am still so sweet an' so dear,
Dey keeps always comin', whar ebber ah does roam;
Ef ah only hab back, jes one littl' hour,
Ah knows, ah could mek mah-sef ter home.

.....

Wen de Kettl'
Spits de Steam 'Gainst d' Pot

Wen ah wuz a littl' niggah baby-gal,
Jes 'bout as high as our ol' sow;
Ah used ter always help mah good Mammy
Do chaws an' keep de flies off de cow.

Ah nebber play'd wid de res' ob de chil'ren,
Cause mah Mammy say'd ah should not;
So ah always listen'd to de kettl' sing,
Wen it spit de steam against de pot.

It whar many yeahs ago — it whar,
An' Mammy's done gone no mo' to' be;
But de same ol' kettl' dat spit fo' her,
Am now bringin' back do'se hours to me.

Ah is old'r now, an' jes lak mah Mammy;
An' ah liv's in de same littl' Log Cabin;
Ah nebber lef' de do'r fo' anudder to shut,
Cause no niggah wuz ebber wuff de habin'.

So ah stays right c'heah 'tills ah dies,
Foh ah luv's eb'ry thing ah has got,
An' it mek me feels mos' happy — wen
De Kettl' spits de steam against de pot.

De Wish-bone We Hung up Nex' Day

A Parody

It wuz de Eb'nin' befo' de Thanksgibin' time -
Ah mem'ers it too, fo' it wuz no chile-play.
An' dere wahn't a'decen' mouthful in de Cabin,
Dat could do a'bit t'ward drivin' hunger away.

Mah big fat sow, dat ah 'spected to kill,
Jes' lay'd down an' died de week befo'
An' dere wuzn't no use totin' cotten to gin;
Foh de market wuz done full up to de do'.

Mah ol' yal'er dog wuz as near skin an' bone,
As ebber he had hear'd to be in dis life;
So ah lets 'm go an' pay a'visit to de neighbors,
Leabin' at home, jes' me an' Dinah, mah wife.

Now ah doan stan's good fo' what animals does,
Ef dey do steals, dats none ob mah lookout;
An' ah doan thinks dat it am much ob a'sin,
To eat what hab imp'dence to be floatin' a'bout.

De moon wuz shinin' on dat partic'lar night,
An' we wuz sittin, an' smokin', an' talkin';
When ah hear'd footsteps,-lak dey's familiar;-
Dat seem'd all roun' de Cabin to be stalkin'.

So ah say's: "Dinah, yo' goes an' sees who 'tis,"
Fo' womens always ten's to visitin' in de South;
An' when de do' open'd, dar in de moonlight,
Stood mah yal'er Pup, wid a' Turkey in his mouth.

Fo' de Lor's sakes a'live, de sense ob dat Pup;
Ah feels thankful, ah do, fo' his thinkin' way;
But ah sho' lak to kno', whar dat sens'bl dog
Got de Bird, wid wish-bone we hung up nex' day.

"Who's Me"

Ah is jes' a' littl' Pickaninny,
As black as ah could ebber be;
An ah of'en t'inks ob ax'n yo'
Ef yo' kno's who real'y is me.

Ah has no Pa an' no Ma, lak yo'—
Nebber had none, so dey does say;
An w'en ah always ax's who ah is,
Dey jes' turns dere heads a'way.

Ah won'ers how ah wuz got —
From what black hole did dey dig;
An' ef dere's lots 'er mo' lak me—
Dat looks lak dis littl' Nig!

W'en ah hears de Chil'en call'd
It mek me feels mos' 'shame,
Foh den ah t'inks ob mah own-sef,
Dat nebber gets eben a'name.

Ah nebber habs no toys nor dolls,
An' nobody ebber has a'kiss fo' me;
Doan see why ah gets nuffin',
W'en pictur's show dey meks 'm be.

Ah is lonesom' mos' all de time—
'Cept, w'en ah sees de stars in d' sky;
But dey, doan wants to play wid me,
An' ah ax's dem de reas'n why!

Do de Lord gib peoples dere name,
An a'place up in yonder sky too;
An' do ebrybody hab som'one to lub
Or does dey has to do as ah do?

Ah is jes' a' littl' black Pickanin,
But sho' would lack to kno' who ah be
An' will lub yo' as lng as ah libs;
Ef yo' will only tells, who is me.

" Who Yo' Be "

Sweet littl' Pickaninna-gal ah be's him,
Dat done come to tells yo' who yo' be,
Foh ah is de littl' Niggah dat kno's
Yo' is de piece ob honey, jes' fo' me.

Ah ain't got no diamon's, sweet Pickanin,
'Cept do'se dat yo' can see in mah eyes;
An' ah can't put 'em on yo'r finger, Sweet-one,
But dey tells whar all de bes' lub lies.

Some day ah has a' littl' bungalo' fo' yo',
In de fields whar de cott'n an' de corn,
Will ebber help to mek yo' happy, Pickanin;
Wid sunshine comin' to us eb'ry morn.

Littl' Pic'anin'a! Yo' is mah Sweetheart,
Foh de Lord done mek yo' black, lak me;
An' w'en yo' gets to be a' great big lady,
Mah lips gwine ebber tell, who yo' be.

— ? —

EF AH COULD MEK de Dollars grow on trees,
An' plants do'se trees whar ebber ah do be's;
Does yo' reckon ah would hab a' bigger crop:
Ef ah goes of'en, jes' t' hear de bloss'ms drop?

De Gal an' De Game

W'en yo' goes to de swell dinin' hall,
Wid a'Chicken yo' thinks am all honey;
An' takes from yo' pocket de green
Dat looks lak a'big bunch ob money,-
Dat am de hit!

W'en de wai'tah bring in de bill,
An' yo' puts on de bes' smile yo' can,
An' doan show no sign ob a'worry,
But jes' lets go lak a'puff'd-up man,-
Den yo's safe fo' second base.

W'en after de Opera done shut de do',
An' eb'rything jes' look de extrac' ob glue,
An' yo's blow'd in a'fist full ob money,
An' de sky's b'ginin' to look nice an' blue,-
Yo' is jes' leavin' third base.

An' w'en de clouds b'gin t'get mighty mussy
An' Chickadedee say: "Come w'en yo' can,
Ah would lek yo' to hab de pleasur'
Ob meetin' mah friend — ba'name, Mah Man;"
Den it am a foul, an' yo' is out.

.....

DON'T 'MAGIN', b'cause yo's got de dough,
Dat de 'hole world gwine topple over fo' yo';
Yo' might be de stalk dat gib de stick to cane,
But yo' hasn't wings lak de airoplane.

Yo' may be de grease dat could fry de egg,
Or de sole dat hab to fuss wid wood'n peg;
An' yo' isn't all be 'lassas dat come from de can,
Ef yo' hasn't got de mekins ob a'somethin' man.

Negro Knots

It's fo'teen y'ars since me an' he,
Wuz stradlin' de top ob de fence;
Dem wah de days, not lak dis day -
W'en now, ah has to lib in s'pence.

Ah mem'ers dat Kia-niggah, he sayin':
"Spec' some day, Ophelia, w'en ah is old,
Ah'll ax' yo' to be mah cdder halt; -
Dat is, ef ah ain't aead or yo's cold."

He keep his word, dis dirty Nigger did,
An' ah wish'd to de Lord dat he died;
Foh we is 'bout de poor'st mix ob color
Dat ebber eat de hoe-cake side ba' side.

In de court now is hangin' mah story
Wid knots dat dey doan keah to untie.-
Ah loses feelin's, ah do, w'en dey say:
"Yo'll be out ob dis troubl', bom-by!"

Ah won'ers ef de court-days is ebber comin',
W'en dey'll cut strings wid no such fussin';
Ef ah had mah say, ah'd gib people dere way,
Den dere'd nebber be any mo' mussin'.

.....

MOS' Hur'icanes an' Cyclones, am 'Stirrin' Air'
Made by de peoples
Pushin' mo' den dey can spare;
But de first am 'stinctly de wors' ob de two,
Fo' it am de breeze dat come lak a'sneeze,
An' doan hab a'bit ob sugar in it fo' y'u.

She Do

Ah has a yaller-gal dat thinks a heap ob me—
Dat is, wen no odder's prowlin' roun';
An' she am jes' as sweet as pork-chop meat,
Foh no odder, wid her, hab de comparin' soun'.

Ah seems all de plaster, wen we's t'gedder,
Wid spoonin' pass de mark whar all am grittin';
But wen she roll dem big black-black eyes,
Ah don'ts kno' ef ah stan's, or jes' be's sittin'.

She keep me guessin' de 'hole day long,—
Ah loses a'heap ob sleep eb'ry ebenin', too;
Ef dar's gwine to be any all's-fo'-yo'-sef,
What's de use ob waitin', de way she dol

Ah has plan'd de future, fo' de time to come,
Wid palaces to take de place ob de littl' cabin,
An' box's chuck full ob dollars, made ob gold;
But she seem so slow, dis-all to be grabbin'.

Ah tells her all de fun'y littl' jokin' things —
Entertains her wid de lates' airo-flash's;
But dey doan hab de sort ob soothin' mixtur'
Fo' she ax's ef ah means what ah does hash's.

Ah meks de pictur' move an' sticks it in d'frame,
Wid color ob de rainbow, lak's in de sky. —
An' dat doan come wid'in a'mile ob de sprinkl',
So ah thinks dat gal doan gib her boat de tie.

Guess ah done put too much slippin' okra
To de mush, an' mek ob it a'biffyum-looly'u;
But she am wuf eb'ry lie ah can's glue t'gedder;
An' what's mo', ef dis black chunk don't win,—
She do!

Ah Say'd, GO!

De odder night, 'bout half-after nine,
Ah walks home wid-out lookin' behin'.
An' ah turns de latch, wen ah gets to de do'r
So it doan lose it-sef, ah locks it, to be sho'r.

Ah goes to de hearf', jes' lak ah wuz use't,
Wen ah sees somethin', look lak a'ghost on a'roost;
Ah feels foh mah razor, dat wuz lei' on de way,
Whar some fussin' hab gib it room fo' to stay.

Ah sees dat somethin' movin, an' a'movin' slow,
Look lak it wuz a'comin', so ah say'd: "GO!"
Ah ain't so 'fraid ob ghosts, ef dey does talk;
But wen dey is still, dis Niggah sho' doan gawk!

Concludin' Po'tion

— an', in de drawin' ob dis hyer Sarmon to de
rear end ob de concludin' po'tion; let me artic'
late, as de receibin'-plate am bein' toted roun'; ah
cert'inly feels sorry to reques' de discontin'ance
ob any funder givin' ob checks.

Dey may hab de 'pearanc's—at de bles'ed mo-
ment, but, ah has nebber hear'd ob 'pearanc's
mekin' a'decen' mouf-ful.

Ah derefoh reques's de congregation to please
osberb, dat: he, who gib de paper-check, hab
mercy on him dat am check'd by de paper.

In Marbl' Halls

J'ebber dream dat yo' is Ben Ad'em, —
Mekpiece Bill, Charlie Chap or Sis Mary:
Wid nuffin' to do, but jes' count glue
An' has yo' face eb'ry-wah motionary?

Ef yo' hasn't, den yo' loses half ob yo' life;
Foh it's dis feelin' dat gibs yo' de honey:
Yo' lays down. — Angels pass de stuff aroun'
An' befo' yo' wakes, yo' is rollin' in money!

Shadows an' Comin' 'Vents

Wen ah almos' wakes, one moonshine night,
Ah sees d' Angel standin' close bah mah bed;
Wid a big roll ob somethin' in one white han',
An' a pen in de odder, — jes' scratchin' her head.

Ah thinks to mah-sef: dere am some comin' troubl',
But ah doan zackly catch wah it all might be;
Foh first she done look at de top ob mah head,
Den down at de shoes; dat wuz jes' restin' wid me.

Den ah speaks up an' ax's what be's d' matter,
Fo' ah could see she wuz hidin' some buse;
But she jes' keep scratchin', an' say she done pray;
Only las' week fo' him dat wuz wearin' de shoes.

De moon sneak'd som'whar behin' a big ugly cloud,
An' de Angel mus' ob gone up to Jordon's ribbers;
Foh wen ah wakes, ah sees a'big fat polieman;
Wid a club, an' de shoes; den ah hunts fo' de kibbers.

"Qui donne tot donne deaux fois"

He dat gib quick, gib two time

Ah stan's in de air, on de ladder,
Thinkin' dat ah paints mos' gran';
Eb'rything in de worl' seem so beau'ful,
Dat ah fo'gets de brush in mah han'.

How long ah stays, ah kno's not,
But d'rec'ly from de dep's belo',
Ah hears de sweet'st ob Angel
In de talk ah shoah didn't kno'.

Her mudder-tongue look mos' easy,
Ah is sorry ah couldn't 'stan' her say;
But de shakin' ob do'se Paris'n gestur's,
Sho' gib me de cue, dat ah, had to pay!

Ah couldn't offer much ob a'pol'gy,
B'cause all mah doin' look wrong,
An' de moah ah mess'd wid sof-soapin'
De louder she come out wid dat song.

So ah digs down, deep in mah pocket,
An' pulls out d'big'est roll yo' ebber saw;
Den she smile, wid hooks nebber ceasin',
As mah dollars wuz kibberin' her paw.

Wen ah com's to mah sens's, all's floatin';
But de mem'ry dat's stickin, am sadder. —
Doan totes no mo', foh Donn'rs ah don'no;
Ah jes keeps what ah has, up de ladder!

CITY LIFE am som'what flutin'—
So much goin', heah an' dar.
Eb'rybody sho' in a'hur'y,
Jes t' be skootin'—som'whar!

Down 'mong de Pines

Thanks yer Missy, we's ken sho use de stuff,
An' wants mah hist'ry, wid pinch ob snuff!
Reckon yo' doan find it so pow'rfull good,—
It's hard a goin', wen we needs fillin' wid food.

Well! dis heah be's our Cabin, side dis stream;
Wid de corn an' hogs, an' cow dat gib de cream;
An' me an' mah chil'ren stays heah, yo' see.—
Yo' is right /Missy, dey does all belongs to me.

Mah man! He's done been gone dis many a day,
Libbin' wid some black wench, up dat-a-way.
We doan miss 'im,—wahn't much good no-how,
Got so doggone lazy, he woudn't tend de cow.

Ah speks, some day dat nigger 'll be smooth'n' in,
'Clars to goodness /Missy, ah has d' rollin'-pin;
An' ef he ebber put de hoof in dis heah shed,
Ah gibs him all de reas'n to' holdin' down de bed!

Nol we nebber has too much taters, hogs or peas,
An' sho would miss de corn dat goes wid dese—
Say /Martha! go an' sees de rice doan scorch,
An' Rasl yo' totes ino' pine, an' lays it on de porch.

Yes 'm /Missy, we keeps a movin'—jes ax d' fish,
Dey knows us all, an' meks right smart de dish.—
Look! dat's mah baby yonder, pullin' at de tit,
An' Bossy's so tame, she 'lows de taste ob it.

Lonesom'? bless yo' Hun, dat's not wid us to be
Lak it is wid de White Folks, in de big City.—
Heah Zerus, ah tole yo' quit messin' wid dat pig—
Did yo' ebber see sech foolishness as 's in dat nig!

It keep us goin', but de sun shines eb'ry day,
Som'times it's pow'rful cloudy, but we finds de way, —
Now jes look at dat black face, at de pine;
Ebber since we name him, he's been cuttin' turp'ntine.

Yas'um, we's poor, but rich wid de smile,—
Has no use fo' troubl', it's nebber wuff de while.
Yo' hears dat littl' wench a'hummin' ober dere?
Whar she get de tune, meks us guess fo' fair.

Yas Hun'yl Jes' 'bout as happy as niggers is to be.—
Dey's nine ob us lib'n, de biggest am do'se free;
Dey helps me do de hoein' an' gettin' ob de meat,
An we's got no use fo' shoes a'hangin' to de feet.

We has no mule, mah man done took 'm way,
But dis fall, we 'speks 'er hoss, wen cot'n's in de pay;
An den we aims-ter plowin'; fo' work is all we kno's.—
Missy yo' is good, yo' nebber looks at clothes!

Yo's goin'? Well we hopes yo' finds y'r peoples glad,
'T wahn't much we gib yer, but it's all we had.—
Good-bye,— heah Geofus! get de lady 'nolias, nice;
Ah mus' be goin' too, ah smells d' scorchin' rice!

EF ah had to say,
Jes what ah doesn't speak,
Guess ah'd nebber do much talkin';
But some peoples do
Jes what dey doan squeak,
An' it sure am, mool's-end baukin'.

De Waitin' Chair

Well ah reckon ah can gibs yer a bit to eat,
But firs' yo' mus' be whipin' off yer feet.—
See Honey, ah is old, an' can't bend much now,
Nor get roun' laks ah use'ter, somehow,

'Pears to me Son! hain't it pow'ful small
To be's 'way, from yer home, an' all?
What has yo' done, dat meks yer so shift
An' how did y'r know dat ah'd gib yer lift?

Yes! ah had a'boy mah-sef, many yeahs ago,—
Whar he am now? Good Lord, ah don-kno';
He's a'long been gone, wid white folks to lib:—
Couldn't write, so wahn't fit fo' de news to gib.

Come Son, sit heah, not dar, dat am foh Tommy,
Who's comin' back, ah reckon, to Mommy;
Heah, help yo'sef, yer's sho' welcome to de fish;
An' yo' is lucky too, to hab such a'fine dish.—

An' tell me Son, wouldn't yo' keer to see
Yer Ma, dat's thinkin' as to whar yer be?—
How's came yo' leav' yer peoples,—an' what!
Yo' is married,—an' has a'wife,—an' little Tot!

Well ah reckon some fussin's mek yer stray;
Else yo' doan leav' no home dis-a-way.
Biz'ness dif'rent, from yer eb'ry-day messin'
Done made yer go, yo' say. Yer has me guessin'!

Ah doan' zac'ly get de idee. Yo'r looks am clean,—
Doan' 'pear lak yer clothes ebber mussin' seen.
Can't eat no mo', not even a'roastin' ear?
Dey's sweet, de same as wen mah boy wuz here.

Reckon yo' hankers mo' foh water den fo' meat,—
Whar-foh yo' always keeps lookin' at dat seat!—
What be's dey calls yer,—whar yo' stay?
What—Tommy!—Thomas Jeff—Clay, does yo' say!

Not Tommy, mah Tom. Well fo' goodness sake!
'N back to yer Mommy? Ef dat doan beat hoe-cake!
How's yo' has changed.—Sit dar, dat am de Chair;
Ah keeps it waitin', de Lord done heah mah prayer.

Uncle Eef's Solil'qy ob
"Ah Doan See Why"

Ah doan see why dey puts d' bridge on de fiddle
An' why 'tis, dey has to uses haar on de bow,
Wen bridges am so 'portent fo' de people
An' de haar hab odder places to go.

Ah doan see why dey has to kill de cats
To gets de tunes dat meks 'm tink dey's up near stars,
An ah don't see how de music do keep comin'
From animools, dat hab bin dead fo' yeahs.

Ah doan see why 'tis, such a 'littl' bit ob resin
Mek so much pitch out ob plain eb'ry-day wood;
An' ah can'ts see why dey doan lets kitt'ns 'lone
So peoples can list'n to music jus' as good.

De wood-pecker am peckin' at mah house eb'ry day
An' ah's gettin' skeer'd wid his dash'd peckons;
Ef he doan quit, som'body gwine to move,
Foh dis Cabin am too small fo' two; ah reckons!

Safety Firs'

Ef ah had 'er gal dat ah could trus',
Ah simply thinks ah'd need a'hole lot moah;—
Say, a few million, so ah could jus'
Keep de wolf from chewin 'de knob off d' doah.

De Gals nowadays is wantin' so much,
It teks a'pow'rful pile to keep 'em goin';
An' maybe, ef ah did hab de million in touch,
Ah couldn't keep 'm makin' 'nuff showin'.

So ah reckon ah keeps to mah-sef all de copper,
Den it's safe dat ah doan hab d'lusion
Foh ef she done know, de debbi' doan stop'er
'Till yo' has de wors' kind ob s'clusion.

Won't be Floppin' on Y'u

Yer blabs as though ah has no soul
An' blames me 'cause ah's ugly as sin;
Yo' claims, wen Peter opens yonder gate,
Dat ah stays out an' yo goes in!

Yo' ain't so awfully, awful much
Dat he gwine to mek a'fuss over y'u;—
Ef he do, ah waits, foh de time 'll com'
An' dis am what dis niggah 'tends to do.

Wen yo' is at de gate, messin' wid change.
Ah slips a'roun' an' saws d'bar in two,
An' ef dey's any wings, dat's needin' de Angel;
Dey cert'inly won't be floppin' on y'u.

Whar de Littl' Swallows Lib

Ah use'ter wonder whar de littl' swallows lib,
But now ah nebber thinks, b'cause ah know;
Foh de odder night ah builds a fire in de h'arth
An' de smoke com' down, an' choke me so.

Ah use'ter sees 'em fly aroun' our littl' cabin,
Heah an' dar dey'd dip so swift, gee jim'ny!
Ah nebber gets a chance ter knows, 'till now!
Dat dere home mus' be, in our ol' chim'ny.

Whar's Cinders, Dar's Soot

Look heah, Sam Smiff! Ah doan hes'tates t' tole y'r—
Yo' black unfeelin' full-blood'd total 'clips',
Always sneakin' roun' me an' mah man's Cabin,
Tryin' to mek mah gal b'lieb honey's on yo' lips.

Ah's gwine hab no mo' sech nigger mussin',—
Jumpin' fenc's an' peekin' in mah win'ers,
An' mekin' yo'sef 'spicous, jes 'bout de time
We-alls be fas' asleep by de cin'ers.

B'sides! What's yo' got, dat could keep a'woman,
Wen it look lak yo' needs fillin' in wid pork.
No! ah doan lets no nigger hab mah littl' gal,
Dat hab to jump de fenc's to do de spoonin' talk.

So doan stan's dar lak a mules-end blinkin' fool,
Foh ah means eb'ry word, an' yo' hears mah toot:
Ef yo' can't step to de do' lak a decen' niggah
Som'thin's wrong, Mister Smiff, yo' is full ob soot!

Friends, No Mo'

Wen mah brudder wuz a littl' scamp,
Mah Mammy spank'd him good.
Her say! "Now 'cause yo' wuz so bad,
Yer goes t' bed widout de food."

He didn't get much wen de table wuz set,
Cause ah know der' wahn't nuffin' lef' from noon;
Foh ah done eat eb'ry drop on de plate
An' he lick all de res' off d' spoon.

Mos' ob de time he didn't eat nuffin' at all,
Den mah Mammy sho' think he wuz sick;
An' d' cow an' him would be friends to dis day,
Ef his Ma hadn't ketch'd up to his littl' trick.

Den, fo' sure he did go to bed all alone,
An' jes as em'ty as he could ebber be;
But de cow didn't keah, foh it got a' calf!
An' not anudder bit ob milk did mah brudder see.

Negro Philos'phy

Ah declar' ef dat man ob mine
Isn't de cutest dat ebber did bark.
He done tole me, feed d'baby onions;
So ah doan lose 'm in de dark.

Dis child's losin' nuffin', yo' hears me!
An' ah snickers, wen ah thinks ob d' lark;
Foh now he's jes gobblin' de onions,
An' ah finds him, be's it ebber so dark.

Ef de Dam in d' Milky Way done Bust

Som'times, wen St Peter am mos' too busy,
He done let big holes rust in de Dipper's tin;
Den dere comes de reg'lar ol' wettin'-time
Dat meks houses act lak dey wahn't fit to lib in.

Odder-times, he done poke rags into dose holes,
Den de water drop down, jes a littl' bit. —
Ah knows Pete would use solder, only de Debbl' say
He can't see how he's gwine to mess wid it.

Now ef Peter tell de Milky Dam done am bust,
An' 'stead ob rain, jes cream hab come yo'r way,
Ah puts mah mouf up so ah doan lose a drop,
An' ah keeps it up, till's mah pants won't stay.

Ah has a movin' idee ob de feelin' dis do gib
An' don't know jes how ah'd thank Mister Pete:
But fo' dis coon, dat dam doan bust too soon,
Foh cream am 'bout d' smoothest thing ah kno's t' eat.

None Happier, 'Cept Angels

Ah is jes a littl' piece ob a niggah!
Wid eyes dat look lak bits ob coal
Stickin' in a bucket ob white-wash,
Lettin' in de sunlight to mah soul.

Ah plays eb'ry day roun' our littl' cabin
So ah hears mah good Mammy's call;
An ah kno's no littl' niggers is happier,—
'Cept de Lord mek Angels ob dem all.

Wen Black am Black

By Miss Martha Brown

See heah, Liza Johnson!
Ah knows ah's mighty black;
But ah don'ts keep pushin'
B'hind no pers'ns back.
Yer says ah puts de lye
In eb-ry wash ah do!
Den wench, ah laks ter know
Who puts dat lie in y'u.

Now ef ah 'mem'ers right,
'T wuz de middle ob de las' week,
Ah hears white folks tellin'
'Bout y'u, as bein' sho'ly sleek.—
Doan kno' who yer's been doin',
What's mo', doan keah a fig,
Foh y'u is 'bout as nex' to nuffin'
As ah ebber knew a nig.

An' fundermo', Miss Johnson,
Ah means jes what ah says;
Ef yo' always measur's odders
By what yo'-sef does wears,
Den stick dis in yer bonnet;
Fo' ah knows jes what yo' do:
Y'U gets de pay fer d' washin'
An' wears dat washin', too!

Hav' a' care Niggah!
Sweets, com' not always from de Cane.

Wen it am d' Same

By Miss Liza Johnson

Is yo' done, Miss Martha Brown!
Wid all yer's got ter gulp?
Well jes list'n to dis worm
Yo' thought y'u'd mash ter pulp.
Might be as what yo' say,
But ah doan wash fo' weeks
To keeps mah man from jail,
'Count ob stealin' chicks.

Yo' says: Ah is nex' to nuffin'!
Well dat's no sin at all;
Ah 'lows ah is—wen nex' to' yo',
Dat meks y'u mighty small.
An' 'cause ah gets ter wear
De clothes dat nebber sags,
Shows dat ah works foh decen' folks;
While yo', does wash fo' rags!

Ah meks no hash ob what ah says
An' tells yer to de teef:
Y'u is 'bout de sorry'st chunk ob fat
Dat ebber get mixed wid beef.—
YO' steals de chicks, an' uses de lye;
Yer eats d' clothes, an' aches fo' spat.
AH eats de chicks, an' wears de clothes!
Now Miss Martha, mek yer suds
Wid dat!

.....

Dey is all crooked lanes
Dat lead to Purgatory.

Whistl', Den He Stop

Wid a big gun, ah goes a Rabbit-huntin',
In de wildest woods ah could find;
Ebber wid mah eye in de front ob mah-sef
So ah nebber sees de things behind.

Foh de little animul's am cute an' quick,
An' will bounce lak dey is made ob air,
But wen yo' don'ts fo'get yer whistl',
Den he stop, yo' shoots; an' he's dere!

De odder day ah takes mah Pap's big gun,
An' ah sneak to dose woods, far 'way;
An' de animul's dat ah see'd an' hear'd
Gib dis little coon plenty words foh to say.

Ah first gets up to mah shins in de mud,
Den de gun got mix'd wid some san'
An' wen ah wuz scrubbin' de barrel, ah spies
A' big snake, jes as thick as mah han'.

Say me. Dat snake an' dis chile doan hitch!
So ah jumps almos' a hun'ed feet or mo',—
Ah wouldn't hab stopped to dis heah day,
Only de taste foh rabbit bother'd me so.

Den, direc'ly up jumped a slick cotton-tail—
Lak to skeer'd me mos' to def,
Ah thinks ob de gun, an' would hab shot,
Ef 't hadn't been dat ah wuz out ob bref.

But jes de same, ah didn't fo'gets to whistl',
An' de durn fool stop an' look aroun';
Ah takes good aim, den pulls de trigger,
An' de smoke make mos' ob de soun'.

Wen it done hab clear'd, an' gone away,
Ah goes to pick up Mister Rabbit foh dinner;
But de place wuz bare, he wahn't dere
An' ah feels mah poor stomach gettin' thinner.

Ah knows he done stop wen he hear mah whistl',
But guess dere wuzn't much bullet to de gun;
Mah Pap sho' mus' ob keep it load'd up
So animul's doan gets de chances ter run.

Ah looks high an' low foh dat long-ear'd scamp,
But nowhar in de bushes wuz dat cott'n-hare.
De nex' time, ah whistl's in de barrel ob de gun!
Den wen ah shoots, de smoke doan hab no scare.

D' Floatin' Sometin'

Dar's a piece ob floatin' somethin'
Ebber in mah dreams, dat do say:
Ah is nebber gwine to be lak de Angel,
B'cause ah ain't been made dat-a-way.

Dar's a bit ob mist sho' is stirrin'
An' siftin' thru de night to de day,
But it am jes a'piece ob dat somethin'
Dat nebber seem comin' mah way.

Dar's a gentle zephyr always squirmen',
An' roun' dis chile do possum-play;
It sho' mus' be a tiny piece ob Hebben;
But mah dream tell, dat it am far away.

A Light Question

By a Dark Cloud

Say Coon! Has yer ebber tole her,
Dat yo' lub'd her,—in hours ob de moon?
Has yo' nebber swung yer arms aroun' her
An' promis'd a weddin'; —mighty soon?

Hasn't yer done lets yer tongue go floppin'
While 'neaf yo' lid de lies be staulkin',
An' mixed a 'hole lot ob funny stuff,
Dat gets yer tangled; as yer's be talkin'?

Did yo' ebber kiss dem lips, an say:
"Ah sho' is glad,—wid pleasur',—some day."
Den close de gate, an' lets her do de thinkin'
An' keeps on goin',—to lips dat's far away?

A Dark Answer

By a Light Zephyr

Ah wonders what dat Niggah would say,
Ef de moon come down from de sky
An' whisper to he, dat dis Zephyr
Would be in odder worlds by' an' bye.

Dar's sech a thing, as Niggers bein' cute,
Foh 'spier'ance meks 'em mo' den wise,
An' ah kno' dat actions hab mos' de say
So ah keeps de wool from shuttin' mah eyes.

Speks he done think his breezes so tender,
Dat de tunes ne spin'd 'il keep on hummin';
Ah knows! wen an hears too much wind
Dar's somethin' wors' 'n rain—dat's comin.

De Barn-yarn

Dar! De das'a'ly deed am done,
Ma say somethin' 'bout killin' a rooster dis day,
So ah gets out mah Pap's great big axe,
An' jes does de choppin' dis a'way.

Ah grabs holt ob one ob his fedders,
He scratch an' done peck'd me foh fair;
Ef ah had jes rais'd dat axe a littl' bit higher,
Ah knows all ob him wouldn't hab cut d' air.

Den ah chases dat rooster all over,
An' at las' he poke his knot out ob de barn;
Ah only hits 'im wid de sof' side ob d' stick
So what's d'use tellin' mo' ob dis yarn.

Whar do Flowers get de Colors From

Whar do de flowers get de pretty colors from,
An' how does dey-alls mek lov' to one anudder;
'on dey isn't lak de birds ob Spring, dat come
To play roun' ae brook, wid whispers to each odder!

Dey can'ts go heah an' dar, an' do what dey please,
De Red, de Yaller; Furpies, Blues an' de Pink.
So how does dey finds de colors wid such ease,
Jes swayin' to an' aro, not knowin' much fo' think.

Do de breezes carry to dem, all d' pretty things,
Dat 'sists 'em wid whatebber dey laks t' know,
Wid de Mornin's Dewdrop comin' to dem on wings,
Kissin' eb'ry one, an' tellin' how 't should grow?

Or be's de fragrance, music, ebber wid sweet hum,
Crossin' fields an' meadows, whisperin' what it spy:
Dat littl' Flowers might gets d' pretty colors from
De Rainbow, after de Sun tek de tears out ob de sky!

Solomon's S'lution

Ah is in de mos' awful quandry.
Ah don'ts kno' what ah shall do;
Dere's Luther waitin' near de church
An' Lijah, dat's done ax'd me too!

Ah's got into some heap ob troubl'
Cause do'se niggers gwine to mek a fuss.
An' ah kno's dere's comin' mis'ch'f,
Jes' 'count mah bein' so 'dic'ulus.

Doan kno' ef ah meks de riffle,
But ah do kno' dis gal hab de plan,
An' de bes' niggah dat win in de game
Takes mē wid 'im, jes as ah stan'.

Now Solomon say: "Cut de Kid in twol"
An' ah feels glad to think ob de idee;
So ah meks up in mind, to Lijah d' half,
An' to Luther, go de odder piece ob me.

But de moah ah thinks ob de s'lution,
De deeper ah goes down in de rut
Till's ah gets so mess'd wid mah thinkin'
Ah could'n see which wuz d' bes' cut.

To has mah-sef sliced half up an' down
Would gib me only one eye foh to see,
Ah sho' kno' dis wench need two;
So dat didn't look lak de cut foh me.

An' to cuts mah-sef fru de middle,
Would be jes' 'bout as foolish as ebber,
But ah says, ah tells 'em, jes de same;
Den ah finds out de niggah mos' clobber.

So we meets wen de moon am smilin',
An' ah jes spreads de idee to de two;
But judgement, dat come from do'se Coons!
Done mek Solomon fo'get all he knew.

Dey bof takes to de idee wid pleasur—
Jes what ah didn't spek would come true!
Foh out come de razors, an' d' fuss begin,
To see who gwine all de cuttin' to do.

Ef d' cloud hadn't push de moon in de face
Spek ah'd had a dozen slashes, or mo';
So while dey wuz tearin' de subjec',
Ah sneaks to mah Cabin, an' bars de do'.

Wen d' Moon mek de Melon look Sweet

Wen de moon shines on de melon
An' dere ain't nobody dat's worryin',
An' de dogs is too tired to do much barkin',
An' dere isn't nuffin' 'cept yo'sef dat's stirrin'.

Den ah feels shoah dere's truth in de sayin':
"Doan lets de grass grow under de feet."
So ah thinks it bes' t' always be a'movin'
Wen d' moon mek de melon look so sweet.

D' Passin' Cloud

Hit's a'comin' B'lindy, look down de road!
An' a'comin' sho, lak a'big blowin' toad,
Ah tells yer, hit's a'comin', an' pow'ful fas'—
No 'tain't Geowasalus, it's done gone pas'!

Wen de Snow mek d' Groun' look Pale

One mighty cold an' pow'rful frosty ebe,
Wen de snow mek de groun' look pale;
Ah say, an' ah says it to mah only-sef—
Jes to see what Santa will gib; 'pon dis nail.

Ah sho' hangs mah boot, an see ef 'tis so,
Dat he real'y do come down de chim'ny flue;
Foh ah hears so many fun'y ticklish stories,
Dat ah thinks it time dis Pickanin com' to.

Ah crawls into mah bed wid pray'rs, an' says:
'Mister Santa! Ah laks to hab jes what ah need.'
An soon, shor' 'nuff, ah wuz half asleep,
Wid de odder half so 't could tell what 't see'd.

De night wuz blustry, an' stirrin' wid cold,
As ah feels de storm a'comin' wid a'swish;
Den in de chim'ny, ah hears a'great big noise,—
Lak a'hundred raindeers, an' Santa; den ah wish!

But ah falls asleep an' gets up late nex' morn
An' crawls from d' bed, wid mah head all a'pick;
Foh dar, in mah boot, dat done fall to de fio'r,
Ah spies a'piece ob a sure wood'n stick.

Ah don'ts kno' ef Santa real'y do be so mean,
But ah does kno', ah got mos' all dat kindlin', good!
Nex' Cris'mus, Pap say, wen bricks gib smoke de way:
Ol' Santa will hab presents, dat am better den de wood!

Do de woman use powder foh d'struction,
Or jes fo' sef-preventib'?

Angel Eyes

Does yo' ebber stops to guess, or won'er,
Wen yo' looks up in de air wid yer eyes,
Or doesn't yo' nebber cares to even ax
What meks de Stars twinkl' in de skies.

Ah of'en sits an' watches dem fo' hours,
An' eb'ry one ob dem habs de winkl';
Dey looks at me, den ah looks at dem,
An' tries to thinks what meks 'em twinkl'.

Ah feels mos' cert'in. it's dere lids a'shuttin'
Eb'ry now an' den, jes lak mine;
Gibbin' to dem de ebber-bright sparkl'
Dat meks 'em be always wantin' t' shine.

Dey actual'y is de cutest ob tiny eyes
Dat ah has had open an' shut fo' me,
An' eb'ry night ah jes lays an' won'ers ef
Dey ain't real'y Angels eyes dat ah see.

An' wen dey sometimes shed de tear
Ah sees it run cleah cross de sky;
An' den ah won'ers who can be so mean
An' what 't is dat meks 'em cry.

Ef yo' ebber looks at dose twinklin' stars,
Ah knows dey'll wink fo' yo' lak dey do fo' me;
Foh dey is eyes ob lots ob Angel-people,
Always watchin'—don't matter how bad yo' bel

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Sowbelly, lassas, taters an' beans,
Eb'ry thing's up—'cept mah sorry jeans;
Cowpeas, cane, rice, grits an' pork;
Ah sho gets wings; wen dey won't lets me walk.

We Nebber Kno's

Wen ah wuz a'Pickaninny-chile,
Ah wish'd ah wuz a'hole lot biggah;
An' now, ah thinks—jes fo' a'while,
Dat ah laks to be again, a'wee niggah.

De yeahs hab done flew out an' in,
Ah can'ts reck'n whar dey-all's be gone;
But ef ah had 'm right-c'heah a'gin,
Ah teks holt, so dey nebber gets torn.

Ah wouldn't do jes' lak ah wuz use'ter,
Foh ah thinks ah'd be mighty slow;
Cause we nebber kno's de kind ob 'scuse t'
Gib to de Lord, foh d'yeahs we lets go.

What Mammy Tole Me Say

Now ah lays me down to sleep,
Ah mem'ers de same words to dis day.
Ah prays de Lord mah Soul to keep,—
Jes lak mah good Mammy tole me say.

Ef ah should die befo' ah wake,
Ah says, wid mah eyes lookin' to de do'r,
Ah prays de Lord mah Soul to take;
Den ah can hear Mammy tell me mo'r.

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